

Cognitive Systems Foresight Project – Highlight Notice

The Cognitive System Foresight Project <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/cognitive.html> has been an excellent vehicle for bringing different communities together to discuss key issues in their research: Cognitive systems are natural or artificial information processing systems, including those responsible for perception, learning, reasoning, decision-making, communication and action. Many of the new research opportunities highlighted lie at the interface between life sciences, social sciences, engineering and physical sciences.

The Biotechnology and Biological Research Council (BBSRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Medical Research Council (MRC) and Wellcome Trust welcome the stimulating research ideas promoted through the Foresight Project, and will work together to support new multidisciplinary research in the area.

Many interdisciplinary research projects in this area are already supported by Research Councils, but as the Cognitive Systems field develops, many more may be needed. To facilitate this research:

- The Wellcome Trust and Research Councils will jointly consider funding interdisciplinary proposals in this area
- Together, the funders will form a ‘Funders Group’ to monitor the applications received by each agency, to share referees, to identify any barriers to collaborative proposals, and to consider the appropriate funding mechanism for each application
- We particularly welcome applications with a strong element of interdisciplinary training, therefore this area will feature in the next discipline hopping call from the Research Councils.

Next Steps

Researchers who wish to develop ideas in this area are now invited to submit a two-page expression of interest identifying:

- Research aims
- Partners
- Cost
- Project plan

These should be e-mailed to one of the following funder’s contacts, who will also provide a first point of contact to discuss ideas:

BBSRC : Harriet.Warburton@bbsrc.ac.uk
ESRC : dawn.woodgate@esrc.ac.uk
EPSRC : Sivasegaram.Manimaaran@epsrc.ac.uk
MRC : Gillian.Murphy@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk
Wellcome Trust : neurosciences@wellcome.ac.uk

This Funders Group will consider the expressions of interest and will then advise the applicant on how to submit a full proposal if appropriate. All funding arrangements for each proposal will be considered jointly by all the funders on a case-by-case basis. Peer review will involve sharing knowledge across the funders and also drawing upon the Foresight College of referees. The mechanism for peer reviewing each proposal will be tailored to the requirements of that proposal.

We hope that these measures will encourage the research community to develop the ideas stimulated by the Foresight Project. These arrangements and the impact they have had on further stimulating the community will be reviewed in the summer 2005.